

Message Text

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PAGE 01 EC BRU 10756 031730Z

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SUBJECT: ITEMS ON ICFTU'S AGENDA

1. SUMMARY. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE
UNIONS (ICFTU) WILL HOLD A MEETING OF ITS EXECUTIVE BOARD
IN BRUSSELS NOV. 24 TO 26. A PREVIEW OF THAT MEETING
PROVIDES A PICTURE OF THE ICFTU'S CURRENT CONCERNS.
END SUMMARY.

2. THE ICFTU IS INTENSIFYING ITS EFFORTS AGAINST THE
"SUPER-POLITIZATION" OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANI-
ZATION, ACCORDING TO OTTO KERSTEN, ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY.
HE SAID THAT "WE VERY, VERY STRONGLY AGREE WITH THE
AFL-CIO IN THIS REGARD."

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PAGE 02 EC BRU 10756 031730Z

3. KERSTEN MADE THIS POINT NOV. 2 IN A BRIEFING SESSION FOR BRUSSELS-BASED LABOR ATTACHES. HE DID NOT GIVE ANY DETAILS ON THESE EFFORTS IN THE ILO, BUT SAID THAT TACTICS WOULD BE DISCUSSED LATER THIS MONTH IN A CAUCUS THAT TWELVE ICFTU GOVERNING BODY MEMBERS WOULD HOLD WITH THE AFL-CIO'S IRVING BROWN JUST PRIOR TO THE ILO GOVERNING BODY MEETING.

4. KERSTEN SAID THAT THE AGENDA OF THE ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, TO BE HELD IN BRUSSELS NOV. 24 TO 26, INCLUDES A STATUS REPORT ON THE ILO SITUATION. OTHER EXECUTIVE BOARD AGENDA ITEMS HIGHLIGHTED BY KERSTEN:

A. ICFTU'S BUDGET. A "REVIEW COMMITTEE" APPOINTED BY THE LAST ICFTU CONGRESS WOULD REPORT ON RECOMMENDATIONS TO OVERCOME THE ICFTU'S DEFICIT. "WE ARE LOOKING INTO HOW WE CAN CUT EXPENSES," KERSTEN SAID. AN EXAMPLE HE CITED: ELIMINATING THE GERMAN EDITION OF THE ICFTU MAGAZINE, FREE LABOUR WORLD, ALSO PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND SPANISH.

B. UNIFICATION OF INTERNATIONAL UNITS. THE ICFTU IS AWAITING WORD FROM THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (WCL) ABOUT ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD MERGING WITH THE ICFTU. "WE WANT TO KNOW WHETHER THE WCL IS SERIOUS OR NOT ABOUT JOINING US," KERSTEN SAID. HE IMPLIED THAT UNLESS THE WCL FAVORED DEFINITE "STEPS FORWARD" TOWARD A MERGER--INSTEAD OF MERELY SUPPORT FOR EVENTUAL "RESTRUCTURING" OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR--THE ICFTU WOULD CUT OFF ITS UNITY TALKS WITH THE WCL.

C. COMMUNIST INITIATIVES. "IN ALL REGIONS, IN ALL BRANCHES OF ACTIVITIES, THE COMMUNISTS ARE ASKING FOR MORE MEETINGS IN ORDER TO SHOW THE WORLD THERE IS ONLY 'ONE WORKING CLASS,' AS THEY PUT IT," KERSTEN SAID. "THE PRESSURE IS BECOMING STRONGER AND STRONGER, AND WE NEED A COMMON ATTITUDE. WE HAVE DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE ICFTU--SOME WANT MORE CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNISTS, SOME WHO WANT NONE AT ALL." KERSTEN INDICATED THAT WHILE LEAVING AFFILIATES FREE TO PURSUE BILATERAL CONTACTS WITH COMMUNIST REPRESENTATIVES, HE OPPOSED "MULTILATERAL" CONTACTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 EC BRU 10756 031730Z

BETWEEN FREE UNIONS AND THE COMMUNISTS.

D. TRADE UNION FREEDOM IN INDIA. THE SUBJECT WAS DISCUSSED AT LENGTH AT THE ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING IN LUXEMBOURG IN MARCH, BUT NO DECISION WAS REACHED, KERSTEN SAID. NEITHER HAS THE ICFTU ASIAN REGIONAL ORGANIZATION BEEN ABLE TO "DEAL WITH THE QUESTION," KERSTEN SAID. HIS OWN VIEW WAS THAT THE ICFTU SHOULD SPEAK OUT IN PROTEST AGAINST THE ARREST

OF TRADE UNIONISTS AND OTHER VIOLATIONS OF TRADE
UNION FREEDOM IN INDIA.

3. SPAIN. THE LABOR SITUATION IS EVOLVING IN
AN "ENCOURAGING WAY" IN SPAIN, KERSTEN SAID, ADDING
THAT "WE BELIEVE WE MUST GIVE MUCH ATTENTION TO
OUR WORK THERE." A DISTURBING NOTE, HE SAID, WAS
THAT THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT HAD RECENTLY BROUGHT
CHARGES AGAINST SEVEN UGT LEADERS INVOLVED IN A
TRANSPORT STRIKE. HE PROMISED "MASSIVE PRESSURE"
TO GET THE GOVERNMENT TO REVERSE THIS DECISION,
AND ANNOUNCED THAT THE ICFTU WAS FILING A FORMAL
COMPLAINT WITH THE ILO THAT SPAIN WAS IN VIOLATION
OF AT LEAST TWO ILO CONVENTIONS.

F. SOUTH AFRICA. THE ICFTU WAS FINANCING
UNIONIZATION EFFORTS IN SOUTH AFRICA, KERSTEN SAID,
WITHOUT PROVIDING DETAILS. HE SEEMED TO BE PUTTING
A HIGHER PRIORITY ON STRENGTHENING THE SOUTH AFRICA
LABOR MOVEMENT RATHER THAN ON BOYCOTTS OR SYMPATHY
STRIKES, ALTHOUGH A PROPOSAL TO EMBARGO TRANSPORTATION
IN AND OUT OF SOUTH AFRICA WILL BE DISCUSSED AT
THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING (SEE EC BRUSSELS 9326).

5. THE SUBJECT OF THE FRENCH CGT'S POSSIBLE
AFFILIATION TO THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
(ETUC) DID NOT COME UP DURING THE BRIEFING, BUT
AFTERWARDS KERSTEN TOLD THE MISSION'S LABOR ATTACHE
THAT THE CGT HAS "NO CHANCE, NO CHANCE AT ALL" OF
ENTERING THE ETUC. HINTON

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